

THE NEW PLAYS

"Merton of the Movies"
Sketchy but Amusing

By CHARLES DARNTON.

THAT screen-struck boob Merton Gilt took shyly to the stage of the Cort Theatre last night and made himself the laughing-stock of an audience curious to see what sort of play George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly had worked out of Harry Leon Wilson's exceedingly clever story "Merton of the Movies."

To any one familiar with the book it must have been plain that Wilson had the best of it. Perhaps this was to be expected. With two of its four acts divided into two scenes, the play not only moved jerkily, but often stopped short as though out of breath or bewildered by new surroundings. It was sketchy, but amusing. If much of Wilson's satire was lost in the rush there remained enough of his dialogue to keep things going pleasantly. In fact, the adapters helped themselves not so liberally that little room was left for original stuff. But they did manage to squeeze in a good bit of fun at the expense of Will Hays, when a former Secretary of Agriculture, who seemed to own the very ground he walked on, called at Merton's boarding house to congratulate the rising young star.

Hope that Merton would be seen as a country clerk "acting" with the store dummies was reasonably well rewarded. Better still was the scene at the casting director's office outside the Hollywood lot, with the youth who longed to do "bigger and bigger things" hanging around for a job. All the "types" were amusing or pathetic, and the conversations between Merton and the businesslike woman who hired them were worth hearing. When he spoke in awed tones of that beautiful star, Bessie Baxter, and ventured to remark that she sacrificed to get up there she did, the worldly-wise casting director gave him a look that spoke volumes as she replied, "I'll say she did."

The scene in which Merton, known modestly as Clifford Armitage, faced the camera for the first time and failed miserably to pick up a book like a human being, left something to be desired. He was seen later in his cowboy outfit and jangling spurs ready to do the "serious" work of Harold Parmelee, but we were denied the merciless fun of seeing that loud-talking comedy producer Jeff Baird make a completely unsuspecting fool of him.

Affairs on the lot took a sympathetic, as well as melodramatic, turn when Merton was disillusioned by one holding the Montague girl "doubting" for Bessie Baxter as she leaped from a tossing ship during a heavy rain. Our disappointment was almost as great because the tank into which the girl supposedly jumped was hidden from view. At least we deserved a splash. For the rest, there was Merton after the heartbreaking night in which he had seen himself on the

Others who deserve honorable mention are Marion Saki, Georgia Caine, Arthur Deagan, Frank Otto, Joseph Niemeyer, Dorothy Newell, Edna Whistler, Marjorie Lane and Mercer Templeton. The dancers are all good, especially a couple of girls who look like twins and kick like clockwork. Our guess is that they are the Lorraine-Sisters, but it's just a guess. George M. Cohan wrote book, lyrics and music for "Little Nellie Kelly," and when he wrote them he wrote a great big hit. B. D.

Sorel Is Satisfying
In "L'Aventuriere."

Mlle. Cecile Sorel was greeted enthusiastically last night in "L'Aventuriere" by a brilliant but not, if you get the distinction, flashy audience, among whom were many of her compatriots, which filled the 39th Street Theatre to welcome her and the Comedie Francaise.

And Mlle. Sorel deserved the greeting. She was, to those who appreciate good acting, wholly satisfying. Even those who came to see the much less-press-agented diamond trimmed hat, the queer yellow hair and the famous Sorel gowns remained to admire her art. Sorel gave them flashes of all of it, for the part of Dona Clotilde in "Enfants Angles" comedy calls for just such a demonstration.

Cohan Has a Hit
In "Nellie Kelly."

"Little Nellie Kelly," the newest George M. Cohan musical show, began an engagement at the Liberty Theatre last night to storms of applause from the most enthusiastic audience Broadway has known in some time. It is a typical Cohan show, with just a bit more speed than usual, just a few more catchy songs than usual—in fact, just a bit more than usual of all the elements that invariably go to make up a Cohan show. Action there is almost every minute, and yet there are times when a wee heart punch creeps in and adds just a touch of the sweetness that everybody loves. In addition to all this, there is a plot with a mystery and everything, although said plot sets pretty well muzzled up at times.

Mr. Cohan has provided the show with a cast of general excellence. Once more we have with us the blonde loveliness of Elizabeth Fines and the care-free attractiveness of Charles King. Together they make a mighty entertaining pair, especially when he sings "You Remind Me of My Mother" to her. Barrett Greenwald sings and dances nicely too in the role of the rival for Nellie's hand, while Robert Plunk makes a funny and very energetic Frenchman.

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Cranberries

"My, but it's good!"

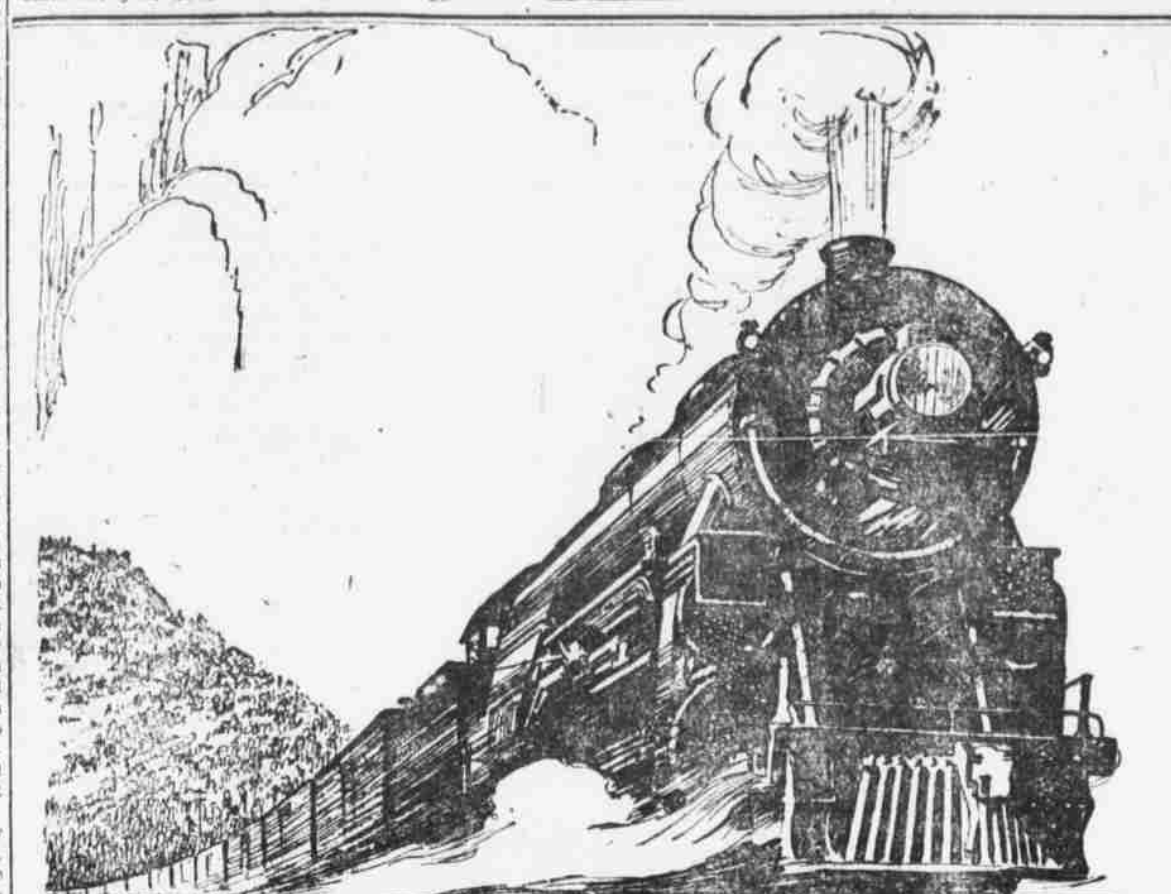
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Economic!—healthful—easy to prepare.

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and better way."
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of Anthracite.

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